

*Of Repentance, and the Fruits
meet for it.*

A

S E R M O N

Preach'd at the

C H A R I T Y - S C H O O L

I N

Shakespear's - Walks.

April 18, 1720.

By J A B E Z E A R L E.

L O N D O N :

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The STATE of the
Charity-School, in
Shakespear's-Walks,
Shadwell.



HERE are Thirty poor Boys taught Reading, Writing, and Accounts; and when qualify'd, put out to Trades at the Charge of the Contributors, and under the Care of proper Managers. It was the first SCHOOL, of
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any now in being among the
 Dissenters, where Children
 were so fully taken Care of.
 And it may be of Weight
 with some to add, That the
 late Reverend Mr. HENRY,
 not only encouraged it by his
 Preaching, but directed a Le-
 gacy towards its Support.



MATTH.



MATTH. iii. 8.

*Bring forth therefore Fruits
meet for Repentance.*



IN this Chapter we have an Account of *John the Baptist's* coming to Preach in the *Wilderness of Judea*. The Doctrine he Preach'd was Repentance, and the Argument he inforc'd it with, was the *Kingdom of Heaven's being at hand*, ver. 2. The Success of his Preaching was great; for *Jerusalem, and all Judea, and the Region about Jordan* went out unto him, and were Baptized of him confessing their Sins. ver. 6. Among others, even *Pharisees and Saducees*, and not a few of them, came to his Baptism, to whom he gives hard Words which they sufficiently deserv'd. In the 7th Verse, and good Advice, in the 8th. Whether any of Us deserve the Character of *Generation of Vipers*, I am not to enquire: But the Counsel I am sure is proper for us all, that we should *bring forth Fruits, meet for Repentance*.

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I SHALL therefore speak to these Words in the following Method.

I. CONSIDER the *Repentance* here mention'd.

II. WHAT are the *Fruits* of it.

III. SHEW the Meetness of bringing forth such Fruits, and urge it upon such as profess themselves Penitents.

I. CONSIDER that Repentance which was preach'd by this holy *Fore-runner* of our Lord, and afterwards by *Himself*, and then by his *Apostles*, and which must and will be preach'd as long as *Christ* has a *faithfull Minister* in the World.

IT is call'd by St. Paul *Repentance towards God*.^b *Repentance from dead Works*,^c and *Repentance unto Salvation*^d, not to be repented of^e. And is made a Duty incumbent upon all Men without any Exception or Limitation: For we are told by the Apostle, That *God commandeth all Men every where to repent*^f; and by his *Master* before him, That *except we repent, we shall all perish*.

THEREFORE it is of great Importance, that we understand the true Nature of it; because how innocent so ever Error may be, in Matters of mere Speculation, a Mistake in so momentous a Point upon which our Title to eternal Salvation is suspended, may prove fatal. I confess, that this Doctrine, plain as it is, has been unhappily

^a Matth. iv. 17.

^d 2 Cor. vii. 10.

3 and 5.

^b Acts xx. 21.

^c Acts xvii. 30.

^e Heb. vi. 1.

^f Luke xiii.

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pily perplex'd by scholastick Niceties; and where Men agree in the Main, their differing about Things which perhaps they had better never have study'd, may have no very ill Consequence. But have we not Reason to fear that the Account some Men have given of this Condition of the Gospel-Covenant, has led many an unwary Soul into everlasting Perdition. I shall therefore give as plain an Account of it, as I can possibly, and as full a one as I think necessary; which I hope to do in the Compass of the Time assign'd me.

REPENTANCE then consists in two Things;

1. A CHANGE of *Mind*.
2. A CHANGE of *Course*.

1. A CHANGE of *Mind*, or a new Turn of Thought. A true Penitent has another Way of thinking then he had before he was led to Repentance, while after his Hardness, and impenitent Heart, he treasur'd up to himself Wrath, against the Day of Wrath, Rom. ii. 4, 5.

1. His Thoughts are turn'd upon spiritual Objects; before, the World ingross'd 'em. He thought of nothing but what he should eat, and what he should drink, and wherewith he should be cloathed, how to gratify his Appetites and Passions, and perhaps how to order Matters, so that his House should continue for ever, and his dwelling Place to all Generations; This was all he thought concerning what should be after the Expiration of his own Term; never seriously thinking of his Passage into the World of Spirits, or what would befall him there; acting

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acting herein like a foolish Traveller, who projects with very great Care and Application to accommodate himself in his Journey, but takes no thought for his Reception and Subsistence at the End of it.

+ BUT now his Thoughts take another Turn. He believes there are Things, that he does not see, in which he is more concern'd than in what he does see. And so he *looks unto Things which are not seen, which are eternal*^a, by that *Faith which is the Evidence of Things not seen*^b, and his Mind is imploy'd about that *invisible Being*, who is the *Rewarder of all them that diligently seek him*^c, and into whose *Hands* he believes it is a *fearfull thing to fall*.

+ HE now looks upon his *Soul*, as a Thing worth his Care, and considers that he did not act judiciously when he let that pass unregarded, and suffer'd his Thoughts to be monopoliz'd by a dying perishing Body. He takes into serious Consideration, what a Condition his Soul is in, to appear before God, and in what Company it is like to be for ever. He thinks of *Angels* and *Devils* as real Things, and not only the Creatures of a warm Imagination fit only to represent the Object of a Lust or Passion. He thinks of that *Jesus*, whom all the *Angels of God worship*, and the *Devils* are forced to *obey*; of what He taught, and did, and suffer'd on Earth, and what He is doing Above, and what He will do when He shall come again from Heaven.

* HE makes the *Word of God* his Meditation, instead of filling, and vitiating his Mind with romantic and theatrical Vanities, or other Amuse-

^a 2 Cor. iv. 18.

^b Heb. xi. 1.

^c Ver. 6.

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amusements, which, tho' perhaps less unbecoming the Dignity of the human Mind, ought not to engross the Thoughts of a wise Man, who considers that he has a Soul that *may* be lost, and *must* be irretrievably so, if all Diligence be not given to secure it. The best, if not the most of his Thoughts are now set upon that other Country, into which his departed Spirit must pass, and where it must abide for ever : And the Method of his securing its Admission into a *better Country, that is an Heavenly* ¹.

2. HIS Thoughts of these Things are *right, and just*. I do not mean, that they are adequate, or always clear and methodical: But they are true and just, that is, according to Truth, he *knows as he ought to know*, and thinks accordingly.

HE thinks *rightly* of God. The glorious Object is indeed Incomprehensible by a finite Mind. Zophar justly observes, That it is impossible to *find out the Almighty to Perfection* ^m, and yet God did bear Testimony to *Job*, that he had spoken (and consequently thought) of the Divine Majesty, *the Things that were right* ⁿ. The Wicked are represented as thinking God to be *altogether such a One as themselves* ^o: But a true Penitent has a right Notion of GOD's being a Spirit infinitely perfect, and conceives aright not only of his Eternity, Immutability, Power, Wisdom and Goodness, but of his Holiness, and Justice and Truth. This is absolutely necessary to all Religion. For as it is a Contradiction to pretend that we sincerely Wor-

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¹ Heb. xi.

^m Job xi. 7.

ⁿ Job xlii. 7.

^o Psal. l. 21.

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ship a Being of whose real Existence we are not certain, (*he that cometh unto God must believe that He is*) so it is utterly impracticable to behave ourselves aright towards God, if we have not just Apprehensions concerning Him. Religion is the Imitation of Him whom we Worship, and if we know Him not in some good Measure, how shall we conform ourselves to Him? This is acknowledg'd by the wiser * *Heathens*, and most expressly declar'd by the *Holy God* †.

† THE true Penitent does also think aright of GOD's *moral Government*, the Instrument of which is his *Law*, which is *Holy*, *Just* and *Good* †, that what He requires is reasonable, what He threatens, in Case of Disobedience, is righteous, and that his Goodness shines in his representing Himself as a *Rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him* †.

† AND that GOD does not govern reasonable Creatures in such a Way as He does other Beings, he concludes from the Nature of his own Soul, which he believes to be the *Off-spring* and *Image* of the *Invisible God*, and furnish'd with Capacities for knowing, serving and enjoying its Creator. He does rightly think that there is a *Spirit in Man*, which when the *Dust* returns to the *Earth* as it was, shall return to God that gave it †. And that God will one Day bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret Thought

* Θέλῃσι ἁποποιῆσαι ἑαυτοῖς τὰ λογικὰ πάντα. *Marcus Antonin.* cap. 10. Sect. 8. *Plato* collocavit Beatitudinem, ἐν ἐπισήμῃ τῇ ἀγαθῇ καὶ ἐν ἁποποιῶσει τῇ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον. *Vid. Gataker.* p. 360. † *Matth.* v. 48. *Rom.* viii. 29. 2 *Cor.* iii. 18. † *Rom.* vii. 12. † *Heb.* xi. 6. † *Eccl.* xii. 7.

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Thought whether it be good or whether it be evil¹. That we must all appear at his Bar, who will judge the World in Righteousness, and render to every one according to his Deeds².

HE has right Thoughts of the Christian Revelation, That JESUS is the promis'd Seed, the *Messiah*, the Anointed, the Sent of GOD, He whom God the Father sealed³; he looks upon it to be a true and faithful Saying, That Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners⁴, and that there is no Salvation in any other; no other Name being given under Heaven among Men whereby we must be saved⁵.

MOREOVER the Penitent thinks aright of the Terms of Acceptance with GOD. That CHRIST will not save all without Distinction, but only such as believe, and repent, and live according to the Rule of GOD's holy Word: According to those Scriptures, *If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your Sins⁶. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish⁷, and that without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord⁸.*

AND farther considering the Corruption and Depravation of human Nature, how that *in us, that is, in our Flesh dwells no good Thing⁹* (of which he begins by sad Experience to be sensible.) He rightly thinks that the Influences of GOD's Spirit are necessary to a Man's Regeneration and Sanctification, That a Man must be *born of Water, and of the Spirit¹⁰*, and that the *Spirit of Life alone in Christ Jesus, can make him free from the Law of Sin and Death¹¹.*

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¹ Eccl. xii. 14.

² Rom. ii. 6.

³ John vi. 27.

⁴ 1 Tim. i. 15.

⁵ Acts iv. 12.

⁶ John viii. 24.

⁷ Luke xiii. 3.

⁸ Heb. xii. 14.

⁹ Rom. vii.

¹⁰ John iii.

¹¹ Rom. viii.

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IN a Word, He thinks justly that his Religion must be gathered from the *Scriptures*, and that presupposing the Principles of natural Religion, the Substance of *Christianity* as set forth in the Gospel is to believe in JESUS CHRIST *who of God is made to us, Wisdom, Righteousness, and Sanctification and Redemption*^f. To follow his Example under the Influence of what He has declar'd concerning our future State of Happiness and Misery, and in Dependance upon the Communications of his Spirit, without which we *can do nothing*.

+ 3. HE thinks of these Things frequently. They are his *Meditation Day and Night*. They press in upon him continually and he is glad they do so. They are *laid up in his Heart and in his Soul*. He thinks of them *when he sits in the House or walks by the Way, when he lies down, and when he rises up*^g. Such Thoughts are habitual and customary, and attend him like his own Shadow. And tho' sometimes diverted upon necessary Occasions they return as regularly as the Worldlings Cares, and in a word, possess his Mind in such a Manner as he that ever knew what it was to set his Heart upon a very ingaging Object may easily imagine, for such are not ignorant what it is to be *absent* in Company, and not to be alone in Solitude, to be often times regularly enough doing one Thing, and yet very affectionately thinking of another.

* AND sometimes the Penitent *retires on Purpose* to think more freely, and to give such a Vent to his Thoughts in Sighs, Tears, Words and

^f 1 Cor. 139.

^g Deut. xi. 18.

and Prostrations, &c. As Prudence forbids when we have any mortal Eye upon us, and longs for the Return of such Opportunities; embracing them whenever they return without regard to ordinary Accommodation. Every Retirement is to him an Oratory, and he had rather be alone in a *Lodge, in a Garden, or Cottage in a Vineyard*, than in a crowded Theatre, or the Anti-Chamber of a Royal Apartment.

4. IN the last Place, he thinks of these Things *closely*. If it could not be said of him heretofore, that God was not *in all his Thoughts*, yet his Thoughts of God and divine Things were slight and transient, they made a short Stay, and left but weak Impressions. They passed as a Serpent upon a Rock, or an Eagle through the Air, leaving no Mark behind 'em. But now Men have *great Thoughts of Heart*, and the *inward Thought of every one of them is deep*. Spiritual Objects are *kept upon the Imaginations of the Thoughts of the Heart*^b, what they think of bears with Weight upon their Spirits. Their *Thoughts accuse or excuse*, as the Case is, trouble or rejoice, as the Matter requires. They dwell upon every proper Subject till their Hearts are affected: They *muse till the Fire burns*. Their Thoughts are affecting, and the proper Passions are stirr'd. From such a Sight and Sense of Sin, as is wrought in 'em by God's Spirit, Blessing their serious Endeavours, springs that *Sorrow, Shame and Confusion of Face*, which is in some Degree a Symptom in every Case of this Kind of that *Contrition and Brokenness of Heart*ⁱ, which

^b 1 Chron. xxix. 18.

ⁱ Psalm li.

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which is so acceptable a *Sacrifice* to GOD, and of which you may every-where read and hear so much in Penitential Sermons and Books of Devotion, that I shall not enter now upon that Matter.

MOREOVER, when he thinks of the *Mercy* of GOD, the *Love* and *Merits* of *Christ*, the free Operations of the *Holy Ghost*, the Promise of *Forgiveness* to the *worst* of *Sinners*, and the Readiness of GOD to *assist* and *accept* his serious return to his Duty and Happiness; the *Monuments* of Divine Grace in the Conversion and Salvation of *notorious Offenders*^k, and the *Patience* of GOD towards himself, that he did not cut him down in his Sins, and long ago cast him into that *Place of Torment*, from whence there is no Redemption. When I say, he thinks closely of these Things, he oftentimes feels such Emotions of Soul in the Actings of Hope, Love, Gratitude and Joy as create a Pleasure not to be describ'd.

AND from these Mixtures and Successions of various Passions which I have mention'd as the Result of deep and frequent Meditation, comes that *Resolution* to change his way of Living, and intirely alter his Conduct without delay, which is immediately, and necessarily Preparatory to his entring upon a Course of Holiness and new Obedience. Which leads me to the

2. BRANCH of true Repentance, which I call a Change of *Course*. It is another Way of ordering one's Conversation, which the Scripture calls *ordering it aright*^l, and is the proper Effect

^k 1 Cor. vi. 11.

^l Psalm 1.

Effect of thinking aright. The Penitent having chang'd his Mind, changes also his Measures, and finding himself wrong, and in Danger of being bewilder'd to his Destruction, he *forsakes his Way*^m, turns about and sets *his Face Zion-ward*. When *the Voice behind him saying, This is the Way walk ye in it*ⁿ, has effectually reach'd him. He is not disobedient to the heavenly Monition, but immediately endeavours to set his next Step right, and proceed no further in the Way that leads down to Death and Damnation. And Four Things he proceeds to without Delay.

1. HE breaks his League with Sin, he was before a *Servant to Sin*^o, in chosen Bondage to it. He now asserts his Liberty and protests, That henceforth he will not *serve Sin*^p. That *Sin shall not reign in his mortal Body, shall not have Dominion over him*^q. He is made sensible that he had no *Fruit in those Things whereof he is now asham'd*^r, and besides that *the End and Wages of Sin will be Death*^s. And therefore he will no longer yield himself a *Servant to obey Sin*, when the Wages of that Service can be nothing but everlasting Destruction. Thus Penitent Ephraim is represented as saying, *What have I to do any more with Idols*^t. The Language of every sincere Convert is, *If I have done Iniquity, I will do so no more*. Accordingly when the wonted Occasions of Sin present, he shuns them. If Sinners entice him, he *consents not*^u, and checks those first Motions of Sin which he uses to cherish, and refuses to *make Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil it in the Lusts thereof*.

2. HE

^m Isa. lv. 7.

ⁿ Isa. xxx. 21.

^o Rom. vi. 6.

^p Ver. 6.

^q Ver. 14.

^r Ver. 21.

^s Ver. 23.

^t Hosea xiv. 8.

^u Prov. i. 10.

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2. HE takes off his Heart from the *World*, that is, he no longer allows himself in the inordinate Love of it, he separates himself from the *Many that say, who Will shew us any Good* ^x. In the Days of his Ignorance he minded nothing but the *Things that are in the World*, the *Lusts of the Flesh*, the *Lust of the Eye*, and the *Pride of Life* ^y. He thought of nothing but Ease and Pleasure, Wealth and Fullness, Honour and Power, and plac'd Happiness in these Things, and seem'd content to *have his Portion in this Life*. But now he is sensible that Vanity, Disappointment and Vexation of Spirit is the whole of a worldly Man's Inventory, and therefore repents heartily that he has so long sought Satisfaction where it was not to be found; and so protests that he will not be put off with these Things. He charges his Conscience to bear its Testimony against his worshipping this Idol any longer. And he begs of God that he would *turn away his Eyes from beholding Vanity* ^z, and that by his Grace he may be enabled to *use this World as not abusing it*; with that Indifferency which the Apostle represents in so lively and elegant a Manner, *Let those that have Wives, be as tho' they had none; and they that weep, as tho' they wept not; and they that rejoice, as tho' they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as tho' they possess'd not* ^a: because *the Fashion of this World passeth away*. He was before pursuing a Shadow in the Paths of Death; he now drops the Pursuit with a Contempt of so mean an Object, and a holy Scorn, that his noble Faculties should be engag'd in so mean an Adventure.

^x Psal. iv.

^y 1 John ii. 15, 16.

^z Psalm cxix.

^a 1 Cor. vii. 29.

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ture. The Charm is now broken, his Eyes are open and so he quits the vile Enchanter, and follows after Immortality in the safe, tho' arduous Ways that lead to it. As *Saul* who left following the Asses, and went in Quest of a Kingdom ^b.

3. He casts off the Yoke of the Devil. The Prince of the Power of the Air, rules in the Children of Disobedience ^c, he leads them Captive at his Pleasure ^d, and therefore is stil'd the God of this World ^e, as well as the Prince of it ^f. It is true, wicked Men are not aware of it, they know not whose Tools they are, and whose Drudgery they do, so far from that, they are sometimes apt to think they are doing God Service ^g; when under the Influence of the grand Apostate they are engag'd in Acts of the highest Rebellion against him. This was the Case of the persecuting Jewish Zealots, and, as our LORD foretold: Thus it was with Paul when breathing out Threatning and Slaughter ^h, he verily thought he ought ⁱ to do it. They may imagine they are serving the Truth, when they need Repentance to the Acknowledgment of the Truth, and are really in the Snare of the Devil ^k. But when a Man comes to have his Eyes open, and thinks aright, he discerns how it stands with him, and immediately professes his Detestation of the vile Usurper, and renounces his tyrannical Dominion. He will no longer serve with that cruel Bondage, which being stupid and insensible he

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formerly

^b 1 Sam. ix. 20.

^c Eph. ii. 3.

^d Tim. ii. 26

^e 2 Cor. iv. 4.

^f John xii. 31.

^g John xvi. 3.

^h Acts ix. 1.

ⁱ Acts xxvi. 9.

^k 2 Tim. ii.

25, 26.

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formerly submitted to. He *resists the Devil*, and refuses to give Place to him. He sets himself to War against Principalities and Powers, and spiritual Wickedness in high Places, being now appriz'd that under what Disguises soever this Tyrant may appear, he is as a roaring Lion, and a ranging Bear, and only tempts that he may destroy.

4. HE solemnly enters himself in the Service of the Great God under the Conduct of JESUS CHRIST the Captain of his Salvation. Having protested against the Authority of those other Lords, that have had Dominion¹ over him, he swears now Allegiance to his rightful Sovereign, declaring that *by Him only he will make mention of his Name^m*. That the Lord alone shall henceforward be exalted in his Soul. That he will Worship the Lord his God, and Him only will he serve. Being convinc'd that all the present Encouragement he could have from his former Sovereign and General, was only a few mean Trifles, Bread of Chaff, and Grapes of Gall, Vanity and Vexation, and all the Wages he was to expect at last was Horror and Despair, to be tormented with him, and by him too, in that Place where the Worm never dies, and the Fire is not quench'd; he wisely forsakes the infatuated Croud, whom he finds Fighting against GOD, resolving to be on the Lord's Side, as being sure that when the Warfare is accomplish'd, when he has fought the good Fight of Faith, and has finished his Course, he shall receive a Crown of Glory; shall be with Christ where he is, and behold his Glory. In a Word, shall be perfect-

¹ Isa. xxvi. 13.

^m Isa. ii. 17.

ⁿ Matth. iv. 10.

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perfectly and for ever happy. And that in the mean Time, he shall want no Encouragement, *Bread shall be given him, his Waters shall be sure, and the Place of his Defence, shall be the Munition of Rocks.* The Armory of God shall supply him with Sword and Spear of Celestial Temper, and with Shield and Helmet impenetrable; he shall *put on the whole Armour of God* *: He shall be sent on no Service too hard for him, his *Shoes shall be Iron and Brass, and as his Day is so, shall his Strength be;* in every Engagement he shall be supported by his invincible Leader, as well as at last *be more than a Conqueror through Him that loved him.*

THUS I have shewn what is Repentance. He that has gone this Length may be congratulated as a true Penitent, but must not be flatter'd, as tho' he had no more to do. No, he is but just now enter'd into the Service, he must be doing Duty till he is discharg'd by his Captain, let the Fatigue and Hazard attending it be ever so great. Tho' he have gone this Length, He is but just *started*, and must not expect the *Crown of Righteousness which fadeth not away*, if he do not *finish his Course*, and run with *Patience*, the whole Race that is set before him. If he Desert, Mutiny, *Strive unlawfully*, wander or tire before the Victory is gain'd, and the Goal reach'd, he loses the Things which he has wrought, for 'tis only he that *endureth to the End shall be saved.*

HE is now planted by the Rivers of Water, and his Business must be to bring forth
C 2 Fruit

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Fruit in his Season. He is in CHRIST as a Branch in that true Vine, but the Care of his whole Life must be to abide in him, and bring forth Fruit, to be filled with the Fruits of Righteousness which are by Christ Jesus, else he will be cast out as a Branch that is wither'd and cast into the Fire and burned ^p. In the Words of my Text, he must bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance. And this leads me to,

II. THE second General Head, which is to shew, *What these Fruits are*, which are said to be meet for Repentance.

† You cannot expect a full Account of every particular Christian Virtue in this short Discourse, I must therefore content myself with telling you in general, That Fruits meet for Repentance, are all the Instances of Conformity, and Obedience to GOD which He requires in his Word, as he calls us to them in the Course of his Providence. Our blessed LORD gives us a Summary of our Duty in these Words, *Matth. xxii. 27, &c. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind, This is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.* And his holy Apostle St. Paul tells us ^q, *That the Grace of God which bringeth Salvation, hath appear'd to all Men, teaching us that denying Ungodliness, and all worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil World. The Fruits of the Spirit (and they all*
are

^p John xvi. 6.

^q Tit. ii. 11, 12,

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are meet for Repentance) are Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance^a. And St. Peter tells us^b, That we must add to our Faith Virtue, to Virtue Knowledge, to Knowledge Temperance, to Temperance Patience, and to Patience Godliness, and to Godliness Brotherly-kindness, and to Brotherly-kindness Charity, and tells us, That then we shall not be barren and unfruitful, &c. Finally, in the Words of St. Paul^c, *Whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report, &c.* All the Particulars of this general Account may I think be reduc'd under Four Heads; which I shall briefly set before you.

I. GODLINESS or *Devotion*. This takes in all the Duties which most directly and immediately refers to GOD. For tho' all Duty terminates ultimately upon him, as all Sin is ultimately against him; yet, it is agreeable to Scripture to distinguish (tho' not separate) what we owe to our Creator, and what to ourselves and fellow Creatures. It is St. Paul's Expression^d. *Herein do I exercise myself to have always a Conscience void of Offence toward God, and toward Men.* Now under this general word Godliness, is comprehended what our Understandings owe to Him, which is to Study, Contemplate and Meditate upon his Nature and Perfections, as far as we are able to make any Discovery of them, from his Word and

^a Gal. v. 22. ^b 2 Pet. i. 5. ^c Ph. iv. 8.
^d Acts xxiv. 16.

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and Works. *To believe* all that He has revealed concerning Himself, tho' we cannot reconcile it to our prejudic'd Imaginations, or fully comprehend it by our narrow Minds. To have a Care of being too curious in our Enquiries, and especially of being dogmatical, in our pronouncing concerning Things unreveal'd, and so out of Reach. Under this Expression also comes in that Love, Desire after Him, and Delight in Him, that Fear and Reverence, that Trust and Confidence, that Submission to his Preceptive Will, and Resignation to his Providential; in a Word, all those inward Regards, which an enlighten'd and renew'd Soul has towards Him; concerning which I cannot now speak particularly. Here also are to be plac'd Prayer, Reading, and Hearing the Word, receiving Sacraments, &c. which tho' they are truly *Instrumental Duties*, yet are also properly *Acts of Homage and Devotion*.

+ 2. SOBRIETY or *Purity*. This comprehends the Main of our Duty to *ourselves*, which is in short to govern our *Appetites* and our *Passions* by right *Reason*, that is, Reason sanctify'd by the Spirit of God, and directed by his Word. This is call'd *cleansing ourselves from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit*. From the *bestly* Filthiness of Gluttony and Drunkenness, and riotous Living. Of Fornication, Adultery, Chambering and Wantonness, and all Sorts of Lasciviousness and Uncleaness, not only such as it is a Shame to mention, but such as it is impossible to discover, because done alone, and so without a Witness, excepting

cepting only that of a stifled Conscience, which will one Day accuse, and a forbearing GOD who will at the last Day avenge, if true Repentance do not intervene. This Cleansing also refers to the *devilish* Filthiness of Hypocrisy, Malice, Wrath, Passion, Envy, Delighting in the Sin, and rejoicing at the Calamities of others; Moroseness, Fretfulness, Discontent and such like, which are Sins of never the less Turpitude; for their being perhaps not so scandalous, as those before mention'd; for these latter are the main Lines of the Devil's Image, who tho' he does his utmost to promote the Filthiness of the Flesh, can Practice only that of the Spirit. Opposite to both these is, that Temperance, Chastity, Modesty, Meekness, Contentment and Command of Temper, whereby a good Man keeps his Heart pure, and in that Purity converses with a holy GOD here, and shall see Him hereafter ^d.

3. THE Practice of all *social Virtues*, that is, doing all the Good to our Fellow-Creatures, which is comprehended in that general Expression of *loving our Neighbour as ourselves*. Justice obliges us to do no Man any Wrong, and Charity requires us to do every Man what Good we can. We must not Wrong; our Neighbour of any Honour or Regard which is due to him from the Relation in which he stands to us. We must not hurt his Body, much less his Soul, his Life, his Chastity, his Property; and his good Name, we must never violate in Thought, Word or Deed. But on the contrary, we are to do him

^d Matth. v. 8.

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him all the Service we can, as to both his spiritual and temporal Concerns, according as the Providence of GOD puts Opportunities into our Hands. Thus that Command runs, *To do good and to communicate, forget; not for with such Sacrifices, God is well-pleas'd*^c. As we have Opportunity let us do good to all Men, especially to such as are of the Household of Faith^e. Nor is the Case of Enemies here excepted, for our Blessed LORD who is the best Expounder of the Law, has requir'd us to *Love our Enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us, and persecute us*^g.

UNDER this Head may be brought in that very necessary Duty of Diligence in our particular lawful Callings. Without which Men are useless to Society, and consequently not fit to be Members of it, unless providentially disabled, and then have a just Right to be maintain'd by the Contributions of others. For thus the Apostle Paul has determin'd the Matter, That if any Man will not work, i. e. imploy himself in some Business or other for the good of Mankind, *neither should he eat*, he pronounces such to walk disorderly, and exhorts Men by the Lord Jesus Christ to *work and eat their own Bread*^h. The Neglect of this makes Men not only useless, but burdensome to the Community, particularly disposes them to several Vices, for which they deserve to be treated as the Pests of Society. Hence arise *Thefts*ⁱ and Robberies (oftentimes ushering in Murders.) Yea, Seditions and Rebellions. To say nothing that these

Sort

^c Heb. xiii. 16.

^f Gal. vi. 10.

^g Matth. v. 44.

^h 2 Thess. iii. 10, 11, 12.

ⁱ Eph. vi. 28.

the Fruits meet for it. 25

Sort of People are at best *Busy-bodies* ^k in other *Mens Matters* ^l, how idle soever they are as to their own, and create more Mischief than perhaps they design'd, or those who encourage them are at first aware of.

I MIGHT here also mention the Concern which every good Man ought to have for the Publick, according to his Station, the Good of which he ought to prefer to any private temporal Interest of his own, if they happen to interfere. But I must leave these Things in short Hints, and refer you for a farther Account to Books and Treatises which are in your Hands, or may easily be procur'd ^{*}.

4. I SHALL conclude, with that most necessary Fruit of Repentance, *Humility*, upon which so much Stress is laid by the best of Men that 'tis commonly, and I think justly said, *So much Humility as a Man has, so much Grace has he; and no more.* I shall not refer you particularly to several Texts in which it is recommended, but only observe, How fit it is to be accounted a Fruit meet for Repentance. When every Penitent acknowledges himself to have deserv'd by every Sin the Wrath and Curse of GOD, both in this Life, and that which is to come; and that in his best Estate he holds but the Rank of a pardon'd Malefactor; and therefore has no more Reason to swell and strut, and bear himself high, than a Wretch condemn'd for the most execrable Crimes has, when he
D has

^k 2 Theff. iii. 11. ^l 1 Pet. iv. 15. ^{*} *Scot's Christian Life, Barret's Christian Temper, Lukin's Chief Interest of Man, Baxter's Directory, The Duty of Man.* And, for the younger and meaner People, the Exposition of the Ten Commandments in common Catechisms.

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has received a Pardon at the Place of Execution. Pride could never become an Angel (and we know to what a Fall it brought 'em) much less a mean, sinful, wretched Worm, who owes it to mere Mercy that he is not in the deepest, darkeſt, and hotteſt Place of Hell. I do not ſpeak this in the leaſt Derogation from the other Virtues, but only to remark how peculiarly it becomes ſenſible pardon'd Duſt and Aſhes to be *clothed in Humility* ^m, and go in that Dreſs all their Days. For I am under the

III. General Head, To ſhew the *Meetneſs* of all the Fruits of Righteouſneſs for Repentance, *i. e.* How fit, proper and becoming it is for thoſe who profeſs themſelves Penitent, to bring forth the Fruits of Holineſs, or in the Words of the Apoſtle, live *in all holy Converſation and Godlineſs* ⁿ. And here I would repreſent,

I. THAT all this is our *Duty antecedently* to the Conſideration of our being Penitents. It is not a Task impos'd upon us by way of Penance for our former Tranſgreſſions, which otherwiſe would not have been expected from us. No; ſerving God is the Buſineſs of the Angels and Spirits of juſt Men made perfect in the Upper World, and would have been ours, if we had never fallen. It neceſſarily Reſults from our being Creatures endu'd with Reaſon and made capable of Religion; inſomuch that no Authority can diſcharge the Obligation we are under, not even that of God Himſelf, while He continues to us the Uſe of thoſe Powers he has given us.

2. BESIDE

^m 1 Pet. v. 5.

ⁿ 2 Pet. iii. 11.

the Fruits meet for it. 27

2. BESIDE this, We are under farther Obligations in Point of *Gratitude*. He that was before our Creator and Benefactor, is now our Redeemer and Saviour ; He has reconcil'd us by the Blood of his Son, not only Reprieves when He might have executed Judgment immediately, but given us a full Pardon, and received us into Favour. The Traitor if he had never offended, would have been bound by his Allegiance to his natural Sovereign ; but the Act of Grace lays him under fresh Bonds, and an after-Act of Rebellion would receive vast Aggravation from his former Pardon. This is the Penitent's Case, and therefore I may use the Words of *Elibu* °, *Surely it is meet, to say unto God, I will not offend any more. That which I see not, teach thou me ; if I have done Iniquity, I will do no more.* When the Prodigal Son was receiv'd with such surprizing Tenderneſs, and re-admitted into the State and Condition of a Son, when he only desir'd to be *made as one of the hired Servants*, how strong were his Obligations to filial Duty, and how monstrous would his future Disobedience have appear'd.

3. EVERY Penitent engages himself by *Promises, Vows and Oaths*, to a Life of Holiness, when he is passing thro' that Scene I have describ'd in the former Part of this Discourse, it is impossible he should omit the most solemn Protestations, that he will hereafter be a new Man and lead a new Life, if God will receive him to favour. And is it not *meet* that he should keep his Vows, and observe the Oath with which he bound his Soul in the Day of his

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Di-

° Job xxxiv. 31, 32.

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Distress, when his *Bones waxed old thro' his roaring all the Day long, and his Moisture was turn'd into the Drought of Summer* ^p? Need I fill my Mouth with Arguments to prove a Thing so perfectly consonant to the common Reason of Mankind?

4. A PENITENT would otherwise act the most inconsistent and unaccountable Part that can be imagin'd, was he really sorry, almost to Distraction, that he had offended GOD and expos'd his Soul to Vengeance; and does he yet think himself at Liberty to take the same Course again? Was he asham'd and confounded to think how he had mispent his Time, neglected GOD and his own Soul, and is this imagin'd to be in consistency with *his returning as a Dog to his Vomit, and a Sow that is wash'd to her wallowing in the Mire* ^q. Either he was distracted when he underwent the Pangs of the New-Birth, or he is not now in his right Mind if he questions his Obligation to live a new Life. And is it not *meet* that Men should act rationally and consistently? Tho' they venture to mock God will they Unman themselves. *Remember this, and shew yourselves Men* ^r.

5. BUT I must add to all this, That our present *Peace* and our everlasting *Happiness* depends upon our bringing forth the Fruits of Righteousness. And *is it not meet* that he who professes *Repentance unto Salvation*, should take Care to the utmost that he so use the Means as to obtain the End. For I must desire you to consider seriously, that *Repentance without Fruits*, will carry a Man no farther towards Heaven* than *Faith without Works*,

^p Psalm xxxii. 3, 4.
xlii. 8.

^q 2 Pet. ii. 22.

^r Isaiah

the Fruits meet for it. 29

Works. In Dependance upon either of these, Men deceive themselves to their eternal Ruin. And how absurd soever it may be to imagine we shall be sav'd by a dead Faith, it is as foolish to expect it by an unfruitful Repentance. And there's a Circumstance in this latter Case, that aggravates the Matter of Folly on the Side of such a Penitent. The *Believer* sits still and dreams of Heaven and Happiness, as what he is chosen to, and shall obtain without his seeking. But the *Penitent* has taken Pains, and gone thro' a melancholly Scene, he has chosen to eat *bitter Herbs*, has pass'd perhaps many a Night without Sleep, or has been *scar'd with Dreams*, and *terrify'd with Visions*, so that he *has water'd his Couch with his Tears*. In the Distress of his Soul, he has deny'd himself *pleasant Meat*, and sometimes *necessary Food*. He has refrain'd the Pleasures of Mirth, and Wine, and Musick, and when he might have been in the most agreeable Company, has retir'd into a Corner, and been *solitary and alone, as a Sparrow upon the House-top*. He has *beat down his Body*, and pierc'd his Soul thro' with sorrowful Thoughts, neglected, it may be, the Opportunities of Gain or Preferment, while he was intent upon his Soul, besides expending that upon Charity, which might have prov'd a considerable Addition to his Substance. And after having done and suffer'd all this, it proves *in vain*, to all saving Purposes, as much as the *Solifidian's* cheap and easy Whimsies. And that it will be in vain, if he do not *do Works meet for Repentance**, we must insist upon, as long as those *Texts* stand in

* Acts xxvi, 20.

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in the *Bible* which assert the Necessity of Perseverance in a Course of Holiness, to the *Salvation of the Soul*. The Case of such a Penitent, is like that of a Man who with great Expence and Labour brings together Timber and Stones, and hews and frames 'em with a great deal of Pains, and without putting them together, expects a House to dwell in. Or one that Ploughs and Sows, Digs and Plants, and without farther Care and necessary Cultivation, expects a Crop in the Season. No Words can represent, no Imagery can paint the Folly of such as expect the *Salvation of God*, in a Way not warranted by, nay, expressly contrary to the reveal'd Mind of GOD in his Word. From whence I must farther tell you, That nothing will supply the Place of this *fruitful Repentance*.

Not the making a *Profession* of Religion, and enjoying the choicest *Privileges* of the *Gospel*, (I mean the external ones) *Think not to say, We have Abraham to our Father* *. Think not to say within yourselves, We are Christians, we are baptiz'd by regularly impower'd Officers, and that according to the true Design of CHRIST in the Institution. We are in Church-Fellowship, have constant Sacraments, a pure Worship, and regular Discipline; and every Thing is according to the Pattern in the Mount. We are Members of the best constituted Church in the World. So was *Judas*, and Thousands of others now in the Place of Torment.

THINK not to say, But I understand the *Gospel*, and am of a right *Belief*. I hold firmly the *Orthodox* Faith of the Catholick and Primitive Church,

* Matth. iii. 9.

the Fruits meet for it. 31

Church, in Opposition to all the damnable Heresies that wicked Men have brought in. *Think not to say within yourselves*, I not only constantly worship God in Publick, but keep up Worship in my Family (tho' I wish more could truly say so, this last being a Duty scandalously neglected) I am zealous for the Reformation of Manners, I give Alms, and contribute to support the Gospel, and several Publick Works: Nay, I am not a Stranger to Fasting, and other Austerities, &c.

ALAS! Thus many have said, and said it truly, whose Voice shall never be heard among the Multitude of the Heavenly Host, and to whom CHRIST will never say, *Come ye Blessed*. In a Word, say what you can in Evasion of this plain Truth, That *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord*; it will serve no other Purpose, but to deceive your own selves, and stupefy Conscience for a while. But out of this Dream, if you do not wake into a *fruitful Repentance*, you will awake in everlasting Fire.

BRING forth therefore *Fruits meet for Repentance*. And the Occasion that brings me here requires I should now put you in Mind to practice one of those social Vertues which I have told you bare such Fruits, I mean *Charity*. The Objects you have before you, and the *Sight* speaks. I shall only say, That of all Charities these *Schools* seem the noblest. Such a Number of Children decently cloth'd, carefully taught the Principles of Religion, and qualify'd to be put out to useful Callings, are to a Mind rightly turn'd a more agreeable Prospect, not only than the common Poms and Vanities of the World, but than (if I may so call them) the spiritual Vanities of magnificent Churches with all their Paintings
and

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and Ornaments, much more than the ridiculous ones of Hospitals made after the Similitude of a Palace.

THEREFORE tho' I have warn'd you against substituting Charity in the Room of the rest of her Sister Graces, and again assure you, that mere giving Alms will never bring an Ill-Liver to Heaven, any more than mere Sabbath keeping (which it seems some of the *Jews* about our Saviour's Time thought sufficient,) Notwithstanding this, I say, I would exhort you not to neglect any Opportunity of shewing that *Money* is not your God, seeing you cannot enjoy it for ever; and then you serve a Master whose Smiles are worth more than Gold, yea, then much fine Gold, by being ready to part with what you can spare in promoting a Work which has so visible a Tendency not only to a Temporal, but a Spiritual, not only a Private, but a Publick Good.

F I N I S.

By the same AUTHOR.

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